

OWENS, MARY

DRAWER

3

ABOUT - NEW SALEM

—H. 1000 020 01434

Abraham Lincoln before 1860

Mary Owens

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

THREE PRICELESS MANUSCRIPTS, ONLY AUTHENTIC LOVE LETTERS OF LINCOLN IN EXISTENCE, BROUGHT TO LIGHT HERE

Controversy Over Alleged Forgeries in the Atlantic Monthly Documents Leads to Discovery in Kansas City and St. Joseph of Relics that Have Been Preserved by the Missouri Descendants of Mary Owens More Than Fifty Years—Epistles Tell the Regard of the Poverty-Stricken Young Lawyer for a Kentucky Belle Who Afterward Married Jesse Vineyard and Came to Platte County—How the Letters Were Handed Down with Authenticity Established by Herndon.

Dec 30-1928

not tell. There is great strife and struggling for the office of U. S. Senator here at this time. It is probable we shall see their pawns in a few days. The opposition men have no candidate of their own, and consequently they smile or complacently at the angry snarl of the contending New Bureau candidates and their respective friends, as the Christians does at Catholic rage. You recollect I mentioned in the outset of this letter that I had been unwell. That is the fact, though I believe I am about well now, but that, with other things I can not account for, have conspired and have gotten my spirits so low, that I feel that I would rather be any place in the world than here. I really can not endure the thought of staying here ten weeks. Write back as soon as you get this, and if possible please my for really I have no you. This letter is so dry and to send it, but with my for better. Give my respects to

Write back as soon something that will please since I left that I am ashamed if I can not do any of Abelle and family.

Your friend
Lincoln

Miss Mary J. Owens

Editor's Note: Mr. Macdonald went to St. Joseph, Mo., last week to search for a book he urgently needed, published in that city long ago, "The Life and Adventures of Frank Grouard." He did not find the book, but he did discover something vastly more precious and important—three love letters written by Abraham Lincoln ninety-two years ago, the only existing love letters written by him the genuineness of which is unquestioned.

These three love letters by Lincoln have been hidden in Western Missouri eighty years. The greater part of that time they were in the drawer of an old bureau in a farmhouse near Weston, Mo., guarded carefully by the woman to whom Lincoln wrote them. After her death they went to her descendants. Now, one of these priceless old letters is stored away with heirlooms in the home of Mrs. Jesse Vineyard, 448 Greenway terrace, Kansas City; one is in a bank safe in St. Joseph, Mo., and the third is in a safety deposit box in the vaults of the First National Bank in Kansas City.

The existence of these letters was known to W. H. Herndon of Springfield, Ill., sixty-two years ago, when he was gathering material for his biography of Lincoln. Then they dropped out of sight and for sixty years their whereabouts was unknown to historians of Lincoln and his era.

The discovery of these authentic Lincoln love letters at this time is peculiarly opportune because of the heated controversy that is going on over the publication in the Atlantic Monthly magazine of what it asserts is a series of genuine love letters that passed between Lincoln and Ann Rutledge nearly 100 years ago. Some of the leading experts in Lincolniana declare that the letters appearing in the Atlantic are forgeries.

The Lincoln love letters reproduced on this page of The Star are authentic beyond doubt, and the story of how they were preserved and handed down as precious heirlooms for more than ninety years is told herewith for the first time.

By A. B. MACDONALD.

(Copyright, 1928, by The Kansas City Star Company. Reproduction prohibited except by permission.)

ABRAM LINCOLN'S first love, as dwelt upon in a special article in The Star last Sunday, was Ann Rutledge of New Salem, Ill., a pretty girl with "a face framed in auburn hair," who died three weeks before the day set for their wedding. Her death overwhelmed him with grief that, for a time, bordered on insanity and threw a shadow over his whole life.

All of Lincoln's friends in New Salem pitied him then, as they saw him wandering, disconsolate, about the fields and wooded creek banks and in the inclosure where Ann was buried. One of those was Mrs. Bennet Able, at whose home he often visited. She argued with him that there was no sense in grieving his life away, that he ought to "take up" with another girl; he would need a wife, and the sooner he got one the better off he would be. She was going back to visit her old home in Kentucky and when she returned to New Salem she would bring her sister, Mary S. Owens, with her, if "Abe" would promise to "take up" with her.

Lincoln promised that he would. He had met Miss Owens three years before when she was visiting her sister in New Salem, and he said himself that he thought her intelligent and agreeable.

The Gulf Between Them.

But there was a wide gulf of difference between the social status and upbringing of Lincoln and Miss Owens. He came of what he often described as "low-flung" folks, commonly known in the South as "poor white trash," although, as has been shown recently by William E. Barton, a Lincoln historian, Lincoln's mother, Nancy Hanks, and Robert E. Lee, the great southern general, were both descended from Col. Richard Lee, founder of one of the proudest of Virginia's first families. However, Lincoln never knew that. His father was of "log cabin folks." Lincoln had little schooling; he was self-educated, tall, angular awkward and uncouth. When he first met Mary Owens he was a land surveyor and wore a straw hat with torn brim, linen trousers tucked into high boots, a calico shirt and one suspender.

Mary Owens was one of the families of Kentucky. Her father was Nathaniel Owens, a wealthy and distinguished citizen of Green County, Kentucky. She had been educated partly in a Catholic convent, although she and her family were Baptists. Among her other accomplishments she sang and recited well. Mrs. Hardin Bole, who knew her in New Salem, wrote of her afterward:

"She was handsome, truly handsome, and matronly looking."

But, in spite of the apparent difference between Abe and Mary, her sister, Mrs. Able, saw more in Lincoln than his ordinary acquaintances did. He was always with a book. Walking the one street of New Salem, he would be reading. In his little log store he would lie for hours on the counter, a roll of calico under his head and a book in his hand. He would lie on his back under a tree, his feet propped against its trunk, several feet above his body, reading. Carl Sandburg describes him at that time: "Not only was he the strong young man who could take an ax handle and go to the polls and alone open a way through a gang blocking passage to the voting place; not only was he the athlete who had taken two fighting men and thrown them apart as though they were kittens. He was impressionable, with soft spots, with tremulous pools of changing lights. Though he stood up loose-jointed and comic with appeals in street-corner slang, and dialect from the public square hitching posts, yet at moments he was as strange and far-off as the last dark sands of a red sunset, solemn as naked facts of death or hunger."

Mrs. Able saw traits in Lincoln that made her believe in his future, and she deliberately set about to make him her brother-in-law. She brought her sister, Mary Owens, back with her from Kentucky to New Salem and urged her to do all she could to win him. Years afterward L. M. Greene wrote of her arrival in New Salem: "It was presidential election day when she came and we all observed her as she passed the voting place, for she was the most striking young woman we had ever seen in that village. She was tall, portly, had fair skin, deep blue eyes, dark curling hair, and wore the finest trimmings I ever saw on a woman up to that time. I got to know her well later on. She was jovial, social, loved wit and humor, had a liberal education and was considered wealthy. None of the poets or romance writers have ever given us a picture of a heroine so beautiful as a good description of Miss Owens in 1836 would be."

Greene probably exaggerated. As Lincoln would say, he may have "piled it on a little too thick," but all, including Lincoln, agreed that she

was an accomplished and charming young woman.

The Young Legislator.

At the time of the second visit of Miss Owens to New Salem, Lincoln was a member of the Illinois legislature which met at Vandalia, then the capital. He was so poor when elected he had to borrow money with which to clothe himself decently for the legislature, where he was to get \$3 a day. So he went there wearing a new suit of blue jeans and a "plug hat" of dull-colored cloth, a foot high, in which he carried his letters and papers. Sandburg says of his hair at that time: "His thatch of coarse hair was black when seen from a distance, but close up it had a brownish, rough, sandy tint. He had been known to comb it, parting it far down on the right side, and slicking it down so it looked groomed by a somewhat particular man, but most of the time it was loose and ruffled."

There is no record of what passed between Miss Owens and Lincoln in the time he was near her after her second visit to New Salem in 1836. The legislature convened and he went to it, in Vandalia. She evidently had

promised to write him and did not do it, as the following letter from him to her indicates. This is the first of the three so-called love-letters written by Lincoln to Miss Owens and preserved through the years by her. It is the bashful letter of a young man who was always shy with women, and was especially awed by this brilliant girl from Kentucky. This letter, now in possession of Mrs. Jesse Vineyard of Kansas City, reads:

VANDALIA, December 13, 1836.

Mary:

I have been sick ever since my arrival, or I should have written sooner. It is but little difference, however, as I have very little even yet to write. And more, the longer I can avoid the mortification of looking in the post-office for your letter and not finding it, the better. You see I am mad about that old letter yet. I don't like very well to risk you again. I'll try once more, anyhow.

The new State House is not yet finished, and consequently the Legislature is doing little or nothing. The governor delivered an

inflammatory political message, and it is expected there will be some sparring between parties about it as soon as the two Houses get to business. Taylor delivered up his petition for the new county to one of our members this morning. I am told he despairs of its success, on account of all the members from Morgan's county opposing it. There are names enough on the petition, I think, to qualify the members from our county in going in for it; but if the members from Morgan oppose it, which they say they will, the chances will be bad.

Our chance to take the seat of government to Springfield is better than I expected. An internal-improvement convention was held here since we met, which recommended a loan of several million dollars, on the faith of the state, to construct railroads. Some of the legislature are for it, and some against it; which has the majority I cannot tell. There is great strife and struggling for the office of the United States Senator



ABRAHAM LINCOLN WHEN HE WAS PRACTICING LAW IN SPRINGFIELD ILL. THE MAJORITY OF HIS PORTRAITS AT THAT TIME SHOW HIM WITH HIS HAIR CAREFULLY PARTED AT THE SIDE, COMBED AND PLASTERED DOWN. HE DID THAT ESPECIALLY TO SIT FOR HIS PHOTOGRAPH, BUT THE MOST OF THE TIME HIS HAIR WAS UNCOMBED AND TOUSLED, AS IT IS SHOWN IN THIS PICTURE.

MARY S. OWENS, WHO DECLINED LINCOLN'S OFFERS OF MARRIAGE AND LATER BECAME THE WIFE OF JESSE VINEYARD AND SETTLED ON A PLATTE COUNTY FARM BETWEEN WESTON AND PLATTE CITY. "I THOUGHT MR. LINCOLN DEFICIENT IN THOSE LITTLE LINKS WHICH MAKE UP THE CHAIN OF A WOMAN'S HAPPINESS," SHE WROTE.

here at this time. It is probable we shall ease their pains in a few days. The opposition men have no candidate of their own, and consequently they will smile as complacently at the angry snarl of the contending Van Buren candidate and their respective friends as the Christian does at Satan, a rage. You recollect that I mentioned at the outset of this letter that I had been unwell. That is the fact, though I believe I am about well now, but that, with other things I cannot account for, have conspired, and have gotten my spirits so low that I feel that I would rather be any place in the world than here. I really cannot endure the thought of staying here two weeks.

Write back as soon as you get this, and, if possible, say something that will please me, for really I have not been pleased since I left you. This letter is so dry and stupid that I am ashamed to send it, but with my present feeling I cannot do any better.

Give my respects to Mr. and Mrs. Able and family.

Your friend,

LINCOLN.

Miss Owens answered this letter, but her letter has been lost and forgotten; there is no record of what she wrote.

He Goes to Springfield.

In spite of his suit of blue jeans and his uncouth appearance, Lincoln made his mark in that legislature. He led the fight to move the state capital to Springfield, and won. When the legislature adjourned, in March, 1837, he decided to go to Springfield and set up as a lawyer. He rode there on a borrowed horse, taking with him all the property he owned, a pair of saddlebags containing a few dog-eared law books, a couple of shirts and an extra pair of yarn socks. He was 27 years old. Joshua Speed had a store then in Springfield. After Lincoln became President Speed wrote the following account of Lincoln's arrival:

"Lincoln came into the store with his saddlebags on his arm. He said he wanted to buy the furniture for a single bed. The mattress, blankets,

sheets, coverlid and pillow would cost \$17. He said that perhaps was cheap enough; but small as the price was, he was unable to pay it. But if I would credit him until Christmas, and his experiment as a lawyer was a success, he would pay then; saying in the saddest tone, 'If I fail in this I do not know that I can ever pay you.' As I looked up at him I thought then, and I think now, that I never saw a sadder face.

"I said to him: 'You seem to be so much pained at contracting so small a debt, I think I can suggest a plan by which you can avoid the debt and at the same time attain your end. I have a large room with a double bed upstairs, which you are very welcome to share with me.'

"Where is your room?' said he.

"Upstairs,' said I, pointing to a pair of winding stairs which led from the store to my room.

"He took the saddlebags on his arm, went upstairs, set them on the floor, and came down with the most changed expression of countenance. Beaming with pleasure, he exclaimed:

"Well, Speed, I am moved."

Lincoln was yet thinking of the promise he had made Mrs. Able, to "take up" with her sister, and of her advice to him about taking a wife, and May 7, 1837, three months after his arrival in Springfield, he wrote her again. It must have strained his finances to do this, for it cost 25 cents to mail a letter then; he was woefully poor; he had no certain income nor prospect of any; he was burdened with debts left from his store that failed in New Salem; he was constantly called upon to aid the family of his father—a shiftless farmer on a niggardly tract of land. The uncertainty of his future as a lawyer weighed on him heavily. The gloom of Ann Rutledge's death was yet upon him; he felt that it would be doing Miss Owens an injustice to link her life with his poverty, but he had promised to marry her, if she would have him.

A Chivalrous Letter.

This letter of May, 1837, is a manly letter, a chivalrous letter, in which he holds himself bounden to keep the promise he had made her, if she wishes to accept and share his pov-

REVEALING LINCOLN AS THE HESITANT LOVER.

(Photographed for the first time last week for The Star.)

Springfield, May 7. 1837

Friend Mary

I have commenced two letters to send you before this, both of which displeased me before I got half done, and so I tore them up. The first I thought wasn't serious enough, and the second was on the other extreme. I shall send this, turn out as it may—

This thing of living in Springfield is rather a dull business, after all, at least it is so to me. I am quite as lonesome here as ever was anywhere in my life. I have been spoken to by but one woman since we've been here, and should not have been by her, if she could have avoided it. I've never been to church yet, nor probably, shall not be soon. I stay away because I am conscious I should not know how to behave myself—

I am often thinking about what we said of your coming to live at Springfield. I am afraid you would not be satisfied. There is a great deal of flourishing about in carriages here; which it would be your doom to ~~stand~~ see without sharing in it. You would have to be poor without the means of hiding your poverty. Do you believe you could bear that patiently? Whatever woman may cast her lot with mine, should any ever do so, it is my intention to do all in my power to make her happy and contented, and there is nothing I can imagine, that would make me now unhappy than to fail in the effort. I know I should be much happier with you than the way I am, provided I saw no signs of discontent in you. What

you have said to me may have been in jest; or I may have misunderstood it. If so, then let it be forgotten; if otherwise, I much wish you would think seriously before you decide. For my part I have already decided.

What I have said I will most positively abide by, provided you wish it. My opinion is that you had better not do it. You have not been accustomed to hardship, and it may be more severe than you now imagine.

I know you are capable of thinking calmly on any subject, and if you deliberate maturely upon this, before you decide, then I am willing to abide your decision.

You must write me a good long letter after you get this. You have nothing else to do, and though it might not seem interesting to you, after you have written it, it would be a good deal of company to me in this "lumpy wilderness". Tell your sister I don't want to hear any more about selling out and moving. That gives me the hysps whenever I think of it.

Yours &c -
Lincoln

—Copyright, 1928, by The Kansas City Star Company.
LETTER WRITTEN BY LINCOLN FROM SPRINGFIELD, ILL., TO MARY OWENS. IT IS THE PROPERTY OF GEORGE H. VINEYARD, A BANKER OF ST. JOSEPH, MO., A GRANDSON OF MARY OWENS. HE HAS IT FRAMED BETWEEN TWO PLATES OF GLASS, THE BETTER TO PRESERVE IT, AND HE KEEPS IT IN A SAFE IN HIS BANK VAULT. HE HAS REFUSED \$2,000 FOR THIS LETTER.

LETTERS SHOW LINCOLN WAS HESITANT LOVER

Warned Miss Owens of His Poverty.

1928

Kansas City, Dec. 30.—(P)—Three love letters of Abraham Lincoln to Mary S. Owens of Kentucky, who rejected his proposal of marriage because he "was deficient in those little links which make up the chain of a woman's happiness" have been uncovered here and in St. Joseph, Mo., and were published under copyright in the Sunday edition of the Kansas City Star.

The letters are in the possession of descendants of Mary S. Owens, who became Mrs. Jesse Vineyard and settled near Weston, Mo. They were brought to light accidentally by A. B. MacDonald of the Star staff after being lost for years to historians, who knew of their existence but not of their whereabouts.

The correspondence, in which Lincoln held himself bound to keep his promises to Mary Owens or to release her if she did not care to share his poverty, followed an effort by Mrs. Bennet Abel, sister of Miss Owens, to bring them together, after the death of Ann Rutledge, said to have been Lincoln's first love.

Revealed as Hesitant Lover.

Lincoln at the time was a member of the Illinois legislature and his letters to Miss Owens reveal him as a hesitant lover, rather awed by the brilliant girl from Kentucky.

The first of the letters, written Dec. 13, 1836, from Vandalia, Ill., where the legislature was meeting, is in the possession of Mrs. Jesse J. Vineyard, Kansas City, widow of a grandson of Mary Owens. It told of the fight to remove the state capitol to Springfield and Lincoln ended with a plea:

"Write back as soon as you get this, and, if possible, say something that will please me, for really I have not been pleased since I left you."

When the legislature adjourned in March, 1837, Lincoln, then 27, moved to Springfield and set up a law office.

The next of the letters in posses-

sion of George H. Vineyard, St. Joseph, Mo., banker, was written May 7, 1837, at Springfield.

Lonesome in Springfield.

"I am quite as lonesome here as I ever was anywhere in my life," Lincoln wrote. "I have been spoken to by but one woman since I've been here, and should not have been by her if she could have avoided it. . . ."

"I am often thinking about what we said of your coming to live at Springfield. I am afraid you would not be satisfied. There is a great deal of flourishing about in carriages here, which it would be your doom to see without sharing in it. You would have to be poor without the means of hiding your poverty. Do you believe you could bear that patiently?" . . .

Aug. 16 of the same year, 1837, Lincoln met Miss Owens in New Salem, Ill., where she was living with her sister, but it resulted in nothing definite, for upon his return to Springfield he wrote asking her to make a decision as to their future relations. The letter follows:

"You no doubt will think it rather strange that I should write you a letter on the same day on which we parted; and I can only account for it by supposing that seeing you lately makes me think of you more than usual.

Bares Real Feelings.

"You must know that I cannot see you or think of you with entire indifference; and yet it may be that you are mistaken in regard to what my real feelings toward you are. If I knew you were not, I should not trouble you with this letter. Perhaps any other man would know enough without further information, but I consider it my peculiar right to plead ignorance and your bounden duty to allow the plea.

"I want in all cases to do right; and most particularly so in all cases with women. I want, at this particular time, more than anything else, to do right with you, and if I knew it would be doing right, as I rather suspect it would, to let you alone, I would do it.

"Do not understand by this that I wish to cut your acquaintance. I mean no such thing. What I do wish is that our further acquaintance shall depend upon yourself . . ."

Lincoln, in a letter to Mrs. O. H. Browning, wife of his friend, told of the rejection, saying:

"I have come to the conclusion never again to think of marrying, and for this reason I can never be satisfied with any one who would be blockhead enough to have me."

Mary S. Owens was married to Jesse Vineyard of Kentucky March 27, 1841, and settled on a farm between Weston and Platte City, Mo. She kept and treasured the letters.

HOW LINCOLN PROPOSED.

The Remarkable Letter That Led to an Unhappy Marriage.

[From the Young Ladies' Fashion Bazar.]

Abraham Lincoln's offer of marriage was a very curious one, and, singularly enough, it has but recently come to light. Numerous as his biographers have been, and closely as they have gleaned for new facts and materials, it was left for the latest one—Mr. Jesse Welk, of Greencastle—to discover this unique and characteristic production of Mr. Lincoln's almost untutored mind. The letter is one of several written presumably to the lady he afterward married.

Addressed to "My Dear Mary," it reads thus: "You must know that I can't see you or think of you with entire indifference; and yet it may be that you are mistaken in regard to what my real feelings toward you are. If I knew you were not I should not trouble you with this letter. Perhaps any other man would know enough without any further information, but I consider it my peculiar right to plead ignorance and your bounden duty to allow the plea.

"I want in all cases to do right, and most particularly so in all cases with women. I want at this particular time, more than anything else, to do right with you, and if I knew it would be doing right, as I rather suspect it would, to let you alone, I would do it. And for the purpose of making the matter as plain as possible, I now say you can drop the subject, dismiss your thoughts—if you ever had any—from me forever, and leave this letter unanswered without calling forth one accusing murmur from me. And I will even go further, and say that if it will add anything to your comfort and peace of mind to do so, it is my sincere wish that you should. Do not understand by this that I wish to cut your acquaintance. I mean no such thing. What I do wish is that our further acquaintance shall depend upon yourself. If such further acquaintance would contribute nothing to your happiness I am sure it would not to mine.

"If you feel yourself in any degree bound to me, I am now willing to release you, provided you wish it; while, on the other hand, I am willing and even anxious to bind you faster if I can be convinced that it will in any degree add to your happiness. This, indeed, is the whole question with me. Nothing would make me more miserable than to believe you miserable; nothing more happy than to know you were so. In what I have now said I think I can not be misunderstood, and to make myself understood is the only object of this letter. If it suits you best not to answer this, farewell. A long life and a merry one attend you. But, if you conclude to write back, speak as plainly as I do. There can be neither harm nor danger in saying to me anything you think, just in the manner you think it. Your friend,

A. LINCOLN."

Probably this is the queerest love letter on record and the most remarkable offer of marriage ever made. It is a love letter without a word of love, and a proposal of marriage that does not propose, and yet it led to the great Lincoln's marriage.

Missing Love Letters of Lincoln to Mary Owens Found in Missouri

KANSAS CITY, Mo., Dec. 30. ¹⁹²⁹ (AP)

—Three love letters of Abraham Lincoln to Mary S. Owens of Kentucky, who rejected his proposal of marriage because he "was deficient in those little links which make up the chain of a woman's happiness" have been uncovered here and in St. Joseph, Mo., and are published under copyright in the Kansas City Star.

The letters are in the possession of descendants of Mary S. Owens, who became Mrs. Jesse Vineyard and who settled near Weston, Mo.

They were brought to light accidentally by A. B. MacDonald of the Star staff after being lost for years to historians, who knew of their existence but not of their whereabouts.

Sister Urged Union.

The correspondence, in which Lincoln held himself bound to keep his promises to Mary Owens or to release her if she did not care to share his poverty, followed an effort by Mrs. Bennett Abel, sister of Miss Owens, to bring them together, after the death of Ann Rutledge, said to have been Lincoln's first love. The sister took Miss Owens to live with her in New Salem, Ill.

Lincoln, at the time, was a member of the Illinois Legislature and his letters to Miss Owens reveal him as a hesitant lover, rather awed by the brilliant girl from Kentucky.

First of Letters.

The first of the letters, written Dec. 13, 1836, from Vandalia, Ill., where the Legislature was meeting, is in possession of Mrs. Jesse J. Vineyard, Kansas City, widow of a grandson of Mary Owens. It told of the fight to remove the state Capitol to Springfield and Lincoln ended with a plea:

"Write back as soon as you get this, and, if possible, say something that will please me, for really I have not been pleased since I left you."

When the Legislature adjourned in March, 1837, Lincoln, then 27 years old, moved to Springfield and set up a law office.

The next of the letters, in possession of George H. Vineyard, St. Joseph, Mo., banker, was written May 7, 1837, at Springfield. The historian, Herndon, in his "Life of Lincoln," quoted this letter, but no photograph was ever made.

"I am quite as lonesome here as I ever was anywhere in my life," Lincoln wrote in part. "I have been spoken to by but one woman since I've been here, and should not have been by her if she could have avoided it."

Warns of Poverty.

"I am often thinking about what we said of your coming to live at Springfield. I am afraid you would not be satisfied. There is a great deal of flourishing about in carriages here, which it would be your doom to see without sharing in it. You would have to be poor without the means of hiding your poverty. Do you believe you could bear that patiently? Whatever woman may cast her lot with mine, should any ever do so, it is my intention to do all in my power to make her happy and contented, and there is nothing I can imagine, that would make me more unhappy than to fail in the effort. I know I should be much happier with you than the way I am, provided I saw no signs of discontent in you. What you have said to me may have been in jest, or I may have misunderstood it. If so, then let it be forgotten, if otherwise I much wish you would think seriously before you

decide. For my part I have already decided. What I have said I will most positively abide by, provided you wish it. My opinion is that you had better not do it. You have not been accustomed to hardship, and it may be more severe than you now imagine. I know you are capable of thinking correctly on any subject, and if you deliberate maturely upon this, before you decide, then I am willing to abide your decision."

Begs for Decision.

Aug. 16 of the same year, 1837, Lincoln had a meeting with Miss Owens in New Salem, Ill., but it apparently resulted in nothing definite, for upon his return to Springfield the same day he wrote asking for her to make a decision as to their future relations. The letter follows:

"Friend Mary:

"You no doubt will think it rather strange that I should write you a letter on the same day on which we parted; and I can only account for it by supposing that seeing you lately makes me think of you more than usual, while at our late meeting we had but few expressions of thoughts. You must know that I can not see you or think of you with entire indifference; and yet it may be that you are mistaken in regard to what my real feelings toward you are. If I knew you were not, I should not trouble you with this letter. Perhaps any other man would know enough without further information, but I consider it my peculiar right to plead ignorance and your bounden duty to allow the plea."

Her Happiness First.

"I want in all cases to do right; and most particularly so in all cases with women. I want, at this particular time, more than anything else, to do right with you, and if I knew it would be doing right, as I rather suspect it would, to let you alone, I would do it. And for the purpose of making the matter as plain as possible, I now say that you can now drop the subject, dismiss your thoughts (if you ever had any) from me forever, and leave this letter unanswered, without calling forth one accusing murmur from me. And I will even go farther, and say, that if it will add anything to your comfort or peace of mind to do so, it is my sincere wish that you should."

"Do not understand by this that I wish to cut your acquaintance. I mean no such thing. What I do wish is that our further acquaintance shall depend upon yourself. If such further acquaintance would contribute nothing to your happiness, I am sure it would not to mine. If you feel yourself in any degree bound to me, I am now willing to release you, provided you wish it; while, on the other hand, I am willing and even anxious to bind you faster if I can be convinced that it will in any considerable degree add to your happiness. This, indeed, is the whole question with me. Nothing would make me more miserable, nothing more unhappy, than to know you were so."

Desired Understanding.

"In what I have now said, I think I can not be misunderstood; and to make myself understood is the sole object of this letter."

"If it suited you best to not answer this—farewell—a long life and a merry one attend you. But if you conclude to write back, speak as plainly as I do. There can be neither harm nor danger in saying to me

anything you think, just in the manner you think it.

"My respects to your sister."

"Your friend,

"LINCOLN."

Lincoln, in a letter to Mrs. O. H. Browning, wife of his friend, told of the rejection, saying:

Through With Women.

"I have come to the conclusion never again to think of marrying, and for this reason: I can never be satisfied with any one who would be blockhead enough to have me."

Mary S. Owens was married to Jesse Vineyard of Kentucky, March 27, 1841, and settled on a farm between Weston and Platte City, Mo. She kept and treasured the letters.

Writing of the courtship to W. H. Herndon, Lincoln's former law partner, who was preparing his biography, Mrs. Vineyard said:

"My sister was very anxious for us to marry, but I thought Mr. Lincoln was deficient in those little links which make up the chain of a woman's happiness. Not that I believed it proceeded from a lack of kindness of heart, but his training had been different from mine."

A LINCOLN TALE ON WDAF

A. B. MACDONALD TELLS OF FINDING THREE LOVE LETTERS.

Story of Discovery at Weston, and the Thrills It Brought, Related to Radio Audience by Writer.

The discovery at Weston, Mo., of three love letters written by Abraham Lincoln was related on WDAF last night by A. B. Macdonald of The Star's staff.

"Besides my writing, which fills nearly all my time, I have two hobbies, the collecting of books about the Old West, of which I have more than 1,000, and the collecting of books about Abraham Lincoln," Mr. Macdonald said.

"That explains a trip I made to Weston, Mo., with H. M. Sender of Kansas City to browse and prowl in the old homes there; he to look for antiques and rare old books of any kind, I to hunt for old forgotten books about the days when Weston was a frontier town.

BIG THRILL IN DISCOVERY.

"Imagine the thrill when the mayor of Weston said to us: 'There's a woman here who has three love letters written by Lincoln.' My heart almost stopped beating. I knew of Lincoln's early love for Ann Rutledge, the pretty girl with a face framed in auburn hair, who died three weeks before the day set for their wedding.

"Three unknown love letters written by Lincoln! What a story for The Star if it were true. It seemed too good to be true. But a newspaper reporter learns early in his experience never to shy from the seemingly impossible. In fact, an old axiom in newspaper offices is:

"The incredible is always happening."

MAYOR'S INFORMATION CORRECT.

"I did find the woman, Mrs. Kate Cunningham, just where the mayor said she was, in a brick house opposite the high school on the hill, and I did find three love letters written by Lincoln, the only love letters he ever wrote. They had been written to Mary Owen, asking her to marry him, and while the paper upon which they were written is a little faded, the writing is as fresh and plain as the day Lincoln scrawled it there with a quill pen ninety-three years ago.

"Mary declined to marry him, but she kept his letters. She married Jesse Vineyard; they moved to a farm near Weston and she carried with her the three love letters of the struggling young lawyer, and for eighty years those priceless letters lay hidden from all the world in a farm house there. When Mary Owen Vineyard died, her daughter, Mrs. Kate Cunningham, inherited the three letters. She kept one; she gave one to a niece, Mrs. Jesse Vineyard, Kan-

sas City, and the third she gave to a nephew, George H. Vineyard, a banker in St. Joseph.

"In spite of my effort to be calm, my voice shook as I tried to buy those letters. I offered what to me was an enormous sum for them, but it was declined.

STORY COPIED OVER NATION.

"I was permitted to photograph the three letters and they were reproduced in The Star, together with a page story telling all about them. That story was copied and reproduced by other newspapers over all the country, and collectors of books

Kansas City, Mo. Times
FEB. 10, 1930

Buzzell.

Y, MARCH 22, 1931.

SPORTS
FICTION
WANT ADS
FEATURES

Section B

ee without sharing in it. You would have to be poor without he means of hiding your poverty. Do you believe you could bear that patiently? Whatever woman may cast her lot with mine, should any ever do so, it is my intention to do all in my power to make her happy and contented, and there is nothing I can imagine that would make me more unhappy than to fall in the effort. I know I should be much happier with you than the way I am, provided I saw no signs of discontent in you. What you have said to me may have been in jest, or I may have misunderstood it. If so, then let it be forgotten; if otherwise I much wish you would think seriously before you decide. For my part I have already decided. What I have said I will most positively abide by, provided you wish it. My opinion is that you had better not do it. You have not been accustomed to hardship, and it may be more severe than you now imagine. I know you are capable of thinking cor-

rectly on any subject, and if you deliberate maturely upon this, before you decide, then I am willing to abide your decision.

"You must write me a good long letter after you get this. You have nothing else to do, and though it might not seem interesting to you, after you have written it, it would be a good deal of company to me in this 'busy' wilderness. Tell your sister I don't want to hear any more about selling out and moving. That gives me the hypo whenever I think of it. Yours SC (Sincerely) —

"LINCOLN."

The third and final letter to Miss Owens was written about four months later and it indicates that Lincoln had been to New Salem, and had carried on his friendship with her. This letter is a direct proposal of marriage. It is the one that is in the possession of Mary Owens' daughter, Mrs. Cunningham, at Weston. It follows:

"Springfield, Aug. 10, 1837.

"Friend Mary: You will no doubt think it rather strange

that I should write you a letter on the same day on which we parted; and I can only account for it by supposing that seeing you lately makes me think of you more than usual, while at our last meeting we had but few expressions of thoughts. You must know that I cannot see you, or think of you with entire indifference; and yet it may be that you are mistaken in regard to what my feelings toward you are. If I knew you were not, I should not trouble you with this letter. Perhaps any other man would know enough without further information; but I consider it my peculiar right to plead ignorance and your bounden duty to allow the plea. I want in all cases to do right; and most particularly so in all cases with women. I want at this particular time, more than anything else, to do right with you and if I knew it would be doing right, as I rather suppose it would, to let you alone, I would do it. And for the purpose of making the matter as plain as

possible, I now say that you can now drop the subject, dismiss your thoughts (if you ever had any) from me forever and leave this letter unanswered without leaving forth an accusing murmur from me. And I will even go further and say that if it will add anything to your comfort or peace of mind to do so, it is my sincere wish that you should. Do not understand by this that I wish to cut your acquaintance; I mean no such thing. What I do wish is, that our further acquaintance shall depend upon yourself. If such further acquaintance would contribute nothing to your happiness, I am sure it would not to mine. If you feel yourself to any degree bounden to me, I am now writing to release you, provided you wish it; while, on the other hand, I am willing and even anxious to bind you faster. If I can be convinced that it will in any considerable degree add to your happiness—this, indeed, is the whole question with me. Nothing would make me more miserable than to believe you miserable—noting more happy than to know you were so.

"In what I have now said I think I cannot be misunderstood and to make myself un-

derstood and to make myself un-

A LINCOLN TALE ON WDAF

A. B. MACDONALD TELLS OF FINDING THREE LOVE LETTERS.

Story of Discovery at Weston, and the Thrills It Brought, Related to Radio Audience by Writer.

The discovery at Weston, Mo., of three love letters written by Abraham Lincoln was related on WDAF last night by A. B. Macdonald of The Star's staff.

"Besides my writing, which fills nearly all my time, I have two hobbies, the collecting of books about the Old West, of which I have more than 1,000, and the collecting of books about Abraham Lincoln," Mr. Macdonald said.

"That explains a trip I made to Weston, Mo., with H. M. Sender of Kansas City to browse and prowl in the old homes there; he to look for antiques and rare old books of any kind, I to hunt for old forgotten books about the days when Weston was a frontier town.

BIG THRILL IN DISCOVERY.

"Imagine the thrill when the mayor of Weston said to us: 'There's a woman here who has three love letters written by Lincoln.' My heart almost stopped beating. I knew of Lincoln's early love for Ann Rutledge, the pretty girl with a face framed in auburn hair, who died three weeks before the day set for their wedding.

"Three unknown love letters written by Lincoln! What a story for The Star if it were true. It seemed too good to be true. But a newspaper reporter learns early in his experience never to shy from the seemingly impossible. In fact, an old axiom in newspaper offices is:

"The incredible is always happening."

MAYOR'S INFORMATION CORRECT.

"I did find the woman, Mrs. Kate Cunningham, just where the mayor said she was, in a brick house opposite the high school on the hill, and I did find three love letters written by Lincoln, the only love letters he ever wrote. They had been written to Mary Owen, asking her to marry him, and while the paper upon which they were written is a little faded, the writing is as fresh and plain as the day Lincoln scrawled it there with a quill pen ninety-three years ago.

"Mary declined to marry him, but she kept his letters. She married Jesse Vineyard; they moved to a farm near Weston and she carried with her the three love letters of the struggling young lawyer, and for eighty years those priceless letters lay hidden from all the world in a farm house there. When Mary Owen Vineyard died, her daughter, Mrs. Kate Cunningham, inherited the three letters. She kept one; she gave one to a niece, Mrs. Jesse Vineyard, Kan-

sas City, and the third she gave to a nephew, George H. Vineyard, a banker in St. Joseph.

"In spite of my effort to be calm, my voice shook as I tried to buy those letters. I offered what to me was an enormous sum for them, but it was declined.

STORY COPIED OVER NATION.

"I was permitted to photograph the three letters and they were reproduced in The Star, together with a page story telling all about them. That story was copied and reproduced by other newspapers over all the country, and collectors of books

Kansas City, Mo. Times
FEB. 10, 1930

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Director.
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

No. 201

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

February 13, 1933

LINCOLN'S LETTER TO MRS. BROWNING

Some of the mistakes which Abraham Lincoln made, both in private and public life, have been magnified out of all due proportion to their importance. In no instance is this fact more pronounced than the criticism heaped upon Lincoln for the contents of the letter which he wrote to the wife of his close friend, Orville H. Browning. Many personal notes intended for private interpretation, when displayed for general perusal, appear to have been indiscreet. So this note may be classified among correspondence of that type.

Some authors have attempted to interpret this letter as a serious composition in which Lincoln's character is revealed as that of a vulgar, dishonest charlatan. One recent critic claims that the writing was motivated by the fact that Lincoln had been jilted by a young lady. To use the words of the author, "he was enraged and he then proceeded to disgrace her by a vulgarity of words." Inasmuch as several months had intervened between the time of the aforesaid courtship and the writing of the letter, this was rather a long period for one of Lincoln's disposition to keep up his anger.

Possibly no one should approve the sending of a comic valentine, but, when it is quite clear to the recipient that the sender has made himself the chief object of ridicule, then the offense may be tempered somewhat. Anyone who will read through Lincoln's long letter to Mrs. Browning without any preconceived notions as to its contents, will conclude that he intended no reproach upon anyone but A. Lincoln, and that the whole epistle was written to show what a fool he had made of himself.

The very tone of the letter convinces one that it was written in a light and humorous vein with no thought of accuracy as to detail, but rather with a very noticeable trend towards exaggeration. There is not a serious note in the whole letter, and it is apparently just the kind of a writing that Lincoln hoped to receive in return, when he wrote in his concluding paragraph, "When you receive this, write me a long yarn about something to amuse me." Lincoln's letter to Mrs. Browning was literally nothing more or less than a "long yarn." Literally, a yarn is defined as a "story often implying untruth or exaggeration." For anyone to make more of the letter than this, regardless of the fact that some historical incidents may have served as a background for it, is to lift the entire correspondence from the original setting in which it belongs, and out of which setting no one has a right to interpret it. The letter was written on April Fool's Day, and Lincoln plays upon the idea that he had been made "the biggest fool of all."

To put the complete letter in print would require more than the space available in this entire bulletin, which makes it impossible to release more than the most criticized portions. In the opening paragraph Lincoln writes, "I shall make the history of my life as has elapsed since I saw you the subject of this letter." He states that a married lady of his acquaintance, about to pay a visit to Kentucky, proposed to him that on her return she would bring a sister of hers with her on condition that, "I would engage to become her brother-in-law with all convenient dispatch. I, of course, accepted the proposal."

Lincoln says he had "seen the sister some three years before, thought her intelligent and agreeable," but concluded that "her coming so readily showed that she was a trifle too willing." He then continued with the paragraph that has been so severely criticized:

"In a few days we had an interview; and, although I had seen her before, she did not look as my imagination had pictured her. I knew she was over-size, but she now appeared a fair match for Falstaff. I knew she was called an 'old maid,' and I felt no doubt of the truth of at least half of the appellation; but now, when I beheld her, I could not

for my life avoid thinking of my mother; and this, not from withered features, for her skin was too full of fat to permit of its contracting into wrinkles, but from her want of teeth, weather-beaten appearance in general, and from a kind of notion that ran in my head that nothing could have commenced at the size of infancy and reached her present bulk in less than thirty-five or forty years; and, in short, I was not at all pleased with her. But what could I do? I had told her sister I would take her for better or for worse."

Lincoln then drew the following conclusions: "At once I determined to consider her my wife; and, this done, all my powers of discovery were put to work in search of perfections in her which might be fairly set off against her defects. I tried to imagine her handsome, which, but for her unfortunate corpulency, was actually true. Exclusive of this, no woman that I had ever seen has a finer face. I also tried to convince myself that the mind was more to be valued than the person; and in this she was not inferior, as I could discover, to any with whom I had been acquainted." After weighing the question, Lincoln said, "I now spent my time in planning how I might procrastinate the evil day for a time, which I really dreaded as much as, perhaps more, than an Irishman does the halter." He then informed Mrs. Browning that he was out of the scrape and continued, "I want to know if you can guess how I got out of it?" He then proceeded to give the conclusion of the story:

"After I had delayed the matter as long as I thought I could in honor do, I concluded I might as well bring it to a consummation without further delay; and so I mustered my resolution, and made the proposal to her direct; but, shocking to relate, she answered, 'No.' At first I supposed she did it through an affectation of modesty, which I thought but ill became her under the peculiar circumstances of her case; but on my renewal of the charge, I found she repelled it with greater firmness than before. I tried it again and again, but with the same success, or rather with the same want of success.

"I finally was forced to give it up; at which I very unexpectedly found myself mortified almost beyond endurance. I was mortified, it seemed to me, in a hundred different ways. My vanity was deeply wounded by the reflection that I had been too stupid to discover her intentions, and at the same time never doubting that I understood them perfectly; and also that she, whom I had taught myself to believe nobody else would have, had actually rejected me with all my fancied greatness. And, to cap the whole, I then for the first time began to suspect that I was really a little in love with her. But let it all go. I'll try and outlive it. Others have been made fools of by the girls; but this can never with truth be said of me. I most emphatically, in this instance, made a fool of myself. I have now come to the conclusion never again to think of marrying, and for this reason: I can never be satisfied with any one who would be blockhead enough to have me."

It must be noted that no names or places were mentioned in the correspondence so that no clue whatever was available to Mrs. Browning for the identification of the young lady in the case.

It was only through the exploitation of what was intended to be a personal note, and the publication of personal letters written by Lincoln to Miss Mary Owen that the anonymous character in the letter to Mrs. Browning became identified. To conclude that the letter to Mrs. Browning was written for the purpose of giving an accurate description and character sketch of Mary Owen is far from the point. Any one who reads this letter with an open mind will have no difficulty in discovering whom Abraham Lincoln thought was "the biggest fool of all."

Lincoln's Proposal

From "Heart Throbs," by Permission

Abraham Lincoln's offer of marriage was a very curious one, and singularly enough, it has but recently come to light. Numerous as his biographers have been, and closely as they have gleaned for new facts and materials, it was left for the latest one, Mr. Jesse Welk of Greencastle to discover this unique and characteristic production of Mr. Lincoln's almost untutored mind. The letter is one of several written, presumably, to the lady he afterward married. Addressed to "My Dear Mary," it reads as follows:

You must know that I cannot see you or think of you with entire indifference; and yet it may be that you are mistaken in regard to what my feelings toward you are.

If I knew that you were not, I should not trouble you with this letter. Perhaps any other man would know enough without further information, but I consider it my peculiar right to plead ignorance and your bounden duty to allow the plea. I want in all cases to do right, and most particularly so in all cases with women. I want at this particular time more than anything else to do right with you, and if I knew it would be doing right, as I rather suspect it would, to let you alone, I would do it. And for the purpose of making the matter as plain as possible I now say you can drop the subject, dismiss your thoughts—if you ever had any—from me forever, and leave this letter unanswered without calling forth one accusing murmur from me. And I will even go further and say that if it will add anything to your comfort and peace of mind to do so, it is my sincere wish that you should. Do not understand by this that I wish to cut your acquaintance. I mean no such thing. What I do wish is that our further acquaintance should depend upon yourself. If such further acquaintance would contribute nothing to your happiness, I am sure it would not to mine. If you feel yourself in any degree bound to me, I am now willing to release you, provided you wish it; while on the other hand, I am willing and even anxious to bind you faster, if I can be convinced that it will in any degree add to your happiness. This, indeed, is the whole question with me. Nothing would make me more miserable than to believe you miserable; nothing more happy than to know you were so. In what I have now said I cannot be misunderstood; and to make myself understood is the only object of this letter. If it suits you best not to answer this, farewell. A long life and a merry one attend you. But if you conclude to write back, speak as plainly as I do. There can be neither harm nor danger in saying to me anything you think, just in the manner you think it.

Your friend, Lincoln.

Probably this is the queerest love letter on record and the most remarkable offer of marriage ever made. It is a love letter without a word of love, and a proposal for marriage that does not propose.—Indianapolis Journal.

The Novel Heart Throbs - Weekly 1934

The Story of Abraham Lincoln's Unsuccessful Courtship

LINCOLN'S OTHER MARY. By Olive Carruthers and R. Gerald McMurtry. 229 pp. New York: Ziff-Davis Publishing Company. \$2.50

By LLOYD LEWIS

THIS book about Mary Owens, the Kentucky girl who wouldn't marry Abraham Lincoln, offers an intelligent solution to the historical writer's problem of how to be romantic and realistic at the same time. Recognizing that the known material on this episode in Lincoln's life is too scant to stand alone in a book of respectable size, yet realizing that the implications in the material justify an expanded interpretation, the authors have

had the good sense to fictionalize the story in 191 pages and then discuss for the next thirty-eight pages the documents in the case. Thus the reader who wants a story told him in pleasing narrative form is satisfied, while the reader who wants the historical facts gets his money's worth, too.

In "Lincoln's Other Mary" Miss Carruthers has led off with an imaginary account of the little romance which, in most Lincoln biographies, is handled lightly, even humorously—his gingerly wooing of Mary Owens at a period between his loss of Ann Rutledge and his marriage to Mary Todd. With a good bit

of skill and sensitiveness, Miss Carruthers has re-created the background of the affair and given en Miss Owens and Mr. Lincoln character, dimension and life, setting each in colorful, atmospheric perspective as to the place and period. Outside the fact that she makes Mary slightly more interested in Abe, a shade more undecided about his suit than the documents indicate, Miss Carruthers makes the story entertaining without violating the truth.

MR. MCMURTRY, a tireless and discriminating researcher in this area of Lincolniana, is equally interesting, in his own way, as he describes how the few documents dealing with the incident came to light—how William Herndon in 1866 wormed the story, little by little, out of the heroine, who had by that time been long married to a Jesse Vineyard in Kentucky, and who being furthermore a modest lady disliked to see so much made of what had amounted to very little in her life. Mr. McMurtry weighs judiciously and most sensibly the conflict that exists between Lincoln's "proposal" letters to Miss Owens and his later dismissal of the romance as something he had been really glad to escape—a conflict that has proved a dilemma to those who have always thought of Lincoln as painfully honest

Mr. McMurtry's conclusion is that Lincoln's letter ridiculing himself in the matter and treating it with humor was written to a confidential friend "on April Fool's Day in the spirit of levity." (It had been written on April 1, 1838.) Mr. McMurtry sees this as in no way clouding the sincerity of Lincoln's letters wooing Miss Owens in 1836 and 1837. Lincoln proved bi-ally enjoyed the comedy in his own failures.

Miss Carruthers' imaginary reconstruction of what went on in Lincoln's mind while courting Miss Owens by letter and in person on her visits to relatives in Illinois is based solidly on his known traits and habits of mind. Sentimental, affectionate, lonely, hoping for marriage, he was distrustful of his own capacity to make a woman happy, distrustful of his own deficiencies in gallantry and looks, dubious about the effect his absent-mindedness might well have upon a wife.

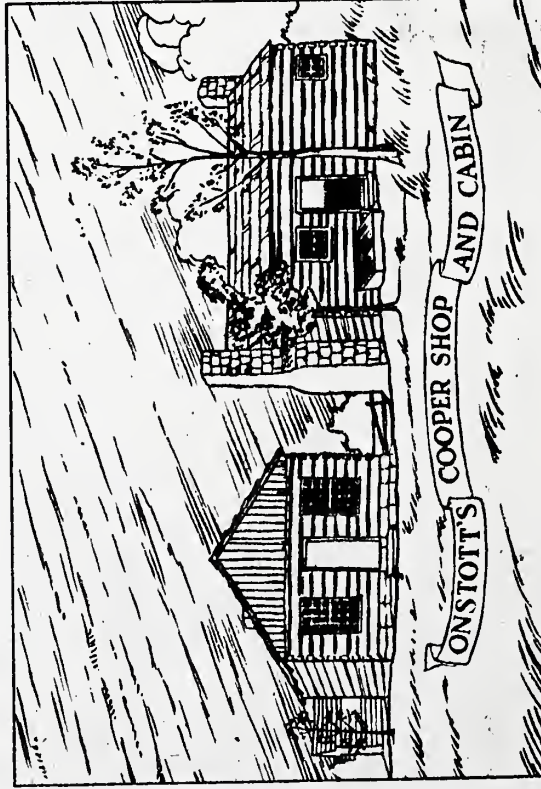
While Miss Carruthers makes the affair seem very real she does not carry the thing farther

in its effect upon Lincoln than William Herndon did originally, and neither she nor Mr. McMurtry produces anything to justify the mystic certainty of Louis A. Warren, Lincoln collector, "that Mary Owens played a greater part in Lincoln's life than Ann Rutledge."

The basic facts apparently remain about where they were, namely, that Miss Owens was not too violently wooed by the shy and sentimental-ly indecisive Lincoln, that although she admired his character and kindness, she turned him down because, as she said to her sister, "who was very anxious for us to be married, that I thought Mr. Lincoln was deficient in those little links which make up a woman's happiness." As for Mary Owens herself, one gathers from "Lincoln's Other Mary" that she was a gay, likable, well-educated young woman. The reader in search of a portrait has a contemporary's word that she was "tall, portly, had large blue eyes and the finest trimmings I ever saw."



Mary Owens.



RECALLS A LINCOLN LOVE

MOTHER OF WESTON WOMAN DECLINED PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE.

Letter, Written by the Emancipator, in Possession Mrs. Kate Cunningham—Knew Martyred President's Human Side.

(By the Associated Press.)

LEAVENWORTH, Feb. 10.—Abraham Lincoln's birthday will mean more than just the birth date of the sixteenth President to Mrs. Kate Cunningham, 86, of Weston, Mo., near here. Her mother refused Lincoln's offer of marriage.

Mary Owens—often referred to as the third woman in Lincoln's life—in 1837 saw fit to decline Lincoln's offer of matrimony, because as Mrs. Cunningham relates her mother's story, she thought Lincoln was lacking in "certain little things that go to make up a happily married life."

Mary Owens was about 25 years old at the time Lincoln asked her to marry him. She was living in Kentucky.

"In a visit to Petersburg, Ill., where her sister, Mrs. Benet Abel lived, my mother met Lincoln for the first time," Mrs. Cunningham related.

At that time Lincoln was serving in the Illinois legislature. His term was for six years, from 1834 to 1840.

Mrs. Cunningham has a letter, written to her mother by the future emancipator, proposing marriage.

Mary Owens instead chose to wed Jessie Vineyard and years later, when Lincoln occupied the nation's highest office, never once regretted her decision, her daughter declares.

Mrs. Cunningham—her close friends and neighbors call her "Aunt Katie"—lives with a nephew and though she never met Lincoln, believes she has been brought very close to the human side of the sixteenth President by stories of him told by her mother.

"And so Monday," "Aunt Katie" said, her dim eyes taking on a glow of reminiscence, "I will sit in tranquil complacency in my easy rocking chair and read once again this letter proposing marriage to my mother—a letter penned by a much beloved man—a great man."

Weston Girl Held Lincoln's Eye

In 1837 Miss Mary Owens, of Weston in Platte County, turned down a marriage proposal from Abraham Lincoln because she thought the disparity in their backgrounds precluded any possible success they could find in life together.

What Miss Owens, a Kentucky aristocrat who moved to Weston with her family years before, didn't know was that Lincoln would become one of America's greatest Presidents.

Letters discovered long after her death reveal a romance between the Illinois statesman and Miss Owens that spanned at least four years. One letter—there are three in all—may join the late President's memorabilia at the Lincoln Historical foundation library in Springfield, Ill.

This is the tentative plan of Miss Owens's descendants, principally the Rev. Dr. James Parrott, a nephew of Miss Lena Parrott, who until 1958 lived in the Weston area.

In 1837 Weston was the largest city between St. Louis and the Pacific Ocean, a fact directly attributable to its strategic location on the Missouri river. It was a steamboat center and had become established as a major commercial hub.

Until shortly before her death, Miss Parrott frequently showed the letters, particularly the "proposal" letter, to friends and amateur historians. But she always wanted to keep the proof of fame in the family.

Historians consider the three letters significant because they disclose much of what had been supposition about Miss Owens and her relationship with Lincoln.

Prior to the discovery of the letters it was generally pre-



LINCOLN

MISS OWENS

sumed that his affair with Ann Rutledge, Lincoln's lost lover of literary repute, was the only serious affair he had before his marriage to Mary Todd Lincoln.

One of the two remaining letters is the joint property of Benjamin and Barclay Vineyard of St. Joseph, Mo. The three letters were distributed among relatives by Mrs. Katie Cunningham, daughter of Mary Owens.

Mary Owens died in Weston in 1877. She had met Lincoln, who lived in New Salem, Ill., through Mrs. Bennet Able, Miss Owens's sister, who also lived in New Salem.

The letters were written by Lincoln in 1836 and 1837, the first one from Vandalia, Ill., then the state capital where Lincoln was a member of the Legislature. Two were written from Springfield, Ill., after Lincoln had led a successful fight to move the capital to that city.

The first letter describes Lincoln's loneliness on arriving in Vandalia for the legislative ses-

sion and he tells of business pending before the Legislature. None of the letters, even the one in which he proposed to Miss Owens, could be called ardent.

One affectionate paragraph:

"Write back as soon as you get this, and if possible, say something that will please me for really I have not been pleased since I left you.

In 1928 the letter was in the possession of Mrs. Jesse J. Vineyard, who lived at 448 Greenway terrace. She was the widow of a noted Kansas City lawyer who was a nephew of a Mary Owens Vineyard's daughter, Mrs. Cunningham.

In 1841, after rejecting Lincoln, Mary Owens married Jesse Vineyard. They moved to a farm between Weston and Platte City.

It was at the farm home there in a bureau drawer that the three Lincoln letters were hidden by Mrs. Vineyard until she

moved back to Weston after her husband's death.

Mrs. Jesse J. Vineyard, who died in 1962, left the letter to her son, James G. Vineyard, a former lawyer here who resides in Apple Valley, Calif.

While family members had planned to keep the letter, they have undergone a change of mind. They are considering donating it to the Lincoln Foundation.

No offers to buy the letter have been received for about 20 years. It became well known that the family had no intention of selling it.

The second letter, written May 7, 1837, from Springfield, was a manly, chivalrous letter in which Lincoln held himself bound to keep the promise he made her if she wished to accept his poverty but releases her if she wished to be free.

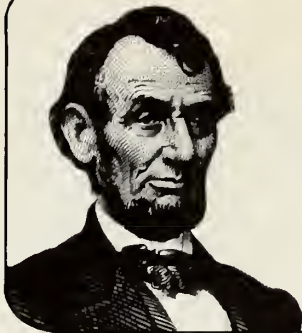
At the time, Lincoln was depressed about his fledgling law practice and inability to make money.

That letter was given by Mrs. Cunningham to another nephew in St. Joseph, George Vineyard. Now dead, Vineyard left the letter to three sons, Benjamin and Barclay Vineyard of St. Joseph and George Vineyard, jr., of Bellport, N. Y. The letter is kept in a vault in the office of Benjamin Vineyard.

Benjamin Vineyard has placed the 2-page letter in a double-layered glass frame and stored it away among other family heirlooms. Occasionally, it is displayed before family or interested historians.

The third letter Mrs. Cunningham at one time kept in a safe deposit box at the First National bank in Kansas City. However, it became lost after her

death and a book published in 1946, "Lincoln's Other Mary," lists the owner of that letter as Miss Parrott who died this month. Now it is in the possession of Dr. Parrott.



Lincoln Lore

March, 1980

Bulletin of the Louis A. Warren Lincoln Library and Museum. Mark E. Neely, Jr., Editor.
Mary Jane Hubler, Editorial Assistant. Published each month by the
Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801.

Number 1705

"That Love Affair": Did William Makepeace Thayer Nearly Uncover the Mary Owens Romance?

Early in the summer of 1862, a Boston publishing firm, Walker, Wise, and Company, asked William Makepeace Thayer to write a book for boys on Abraham Lincoln's early life. Thayer, a Congregationalist minister from Massachusetts, was already locally famous for his boys' biography of Nathaniel P. Banks called *The Bobbin Boy*. Walker, Wise, and Company gave Thayer some letters and documents by John Locke Scripps, the Chicago author of one of the earliest campaign biographies of Lincoln, to prepare him for the task. Thayer planned to use the successful *Bobbin Boy* as a model. He would tell "the actual early life" of Lincoln as "a story, the imagination doing nothing more than to connect facts in the most natural way." This style was "more taking with the young" and allowed Thayer to follow a tested formula, inserting only the facts of another man's life. Thayer's object was "to show that 'the boy is father of the man,' showing the young that pluck and not luck makes the man, when it is accompanied with patience, perseverance, application sobriety, honesty &c."

After about a month of work on the book, Thayer read a letter written from Lincoln's old Illinois friend, Orville Hickman Browning, to his publisher, Mr. Wise. It emboldened him to write Browning on July 18th, to inquire about more details of the President's early life. Thayer's letter, now in the Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress, reveals in detail the origins of his fabulously popular work on Lincoln.

The didactic author asked first about Lincoln's schooling:

The President went to school some in Kentucky before he moved to Indiana[.] There is where I want to begin the story of his life. Is it possible for me to learn any thing about his father's employment then, in what kind of a house he lived, how poor they were,

whether he went to school in a house built for a school, was his father's house & was the school house of logs?

What is the name of the town where he was born?

Like Scripps, Thayer was a sturdy Republican, and he naturally seized on the story of the Lincolns' departure from Kentucky. "His life by Mr. Scripps," Thayer continued, "says that his father left Kentucky because slavery oppressed the poor whites — could I learn any facts about that?" Lincoln had actually told Scripps that his father left Kentucky "partly on account of slavery; but chiefly on account of the difficulty in land titles in K[entucky]." Thayer would continue to stress the antislavery theme which appealed to Republicans.

As an Easterner, Thayer was anxious for the details of life on the frontier. He wanted to know about Lincoln's rolling logs and "going to huskings." He also sought information about those things which made frontier life more civilized. He asked for the names and addresses of "any of his pastors or teachers." He made a special point of asking for "Any facts relating to his temperance principles, & resisting temptations to drink." Descriptions of the baneful effects of heavy drinking before the rise of the temperance movement and admonitions against drinking would form a principal theme in Thayer's Lincoln biography.

Thayer wanted the names and addresses of the Lincolns' neighbors in Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois. He especially desired the address of Lincoln's stepmother, for he would place heavy emphasis on the role of the mother and stepmother in Lincoln's home. Thayer had already written to Mary Todd Lincoln but received no reply. He told Browning that he would like to correspond with her or, at least, with the Lincolns' eldest son, Robert.

One of Thayer's questions was extraordinary:

That love affair — I



THE PIONEER BOY.

From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 1. This illustration from Thayer's book showed the pioneer boy cutting down a tree with his father in the Indiana wilderness.



FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL.

From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 2. The frontispiece of Thayer's book featured young Lincoln on his way to his first day in school.

should really like to learn the leading features of it, inasmuch as there is a matter of honor in it — a prominent part of my object is to show that his strict integrity has given him his *power of character*, which had as much to do with giving him the Presidency as anything.

What love affair? Scripps mentioned no romantic interests in Lincoln's life except his wife. Lincoln's romance with Mary Owens was unknown to the public until the appearance of Ward Hill Lamon's *Life of Lincoln* in 1872. How did Thayer know anything about any "love affair" before Mary Todd?

The answer must lie in Browning's letter to Wise, but the location of that letter is unknown. Browning did know about the Mary Owens affair. Lincoln's famous April Fools' Day letter about it was written to Browning's wife in 1838. That letter made a particular point of Lincoln's desire to do the honorable thing. Having promised to marry Mary Owens, he would live up to the promise even though he did not particularly want to marry her. Why Browning would have written Wise about the matter is unclear. Browning's diary shows that he was acquainted with a Mr. Wise from Boston before the war, but it is not clear whether this was the man associated with Thayer's publishing firm. Lincoln's letter about Mary Owens was old and entirely private, and it was hardly a proper subject for idle conversation, even with a close friend. In the wrong hands, it could have been fuel for ridicule of the President. Even if Browning mentioned it to Wise, it seems strange that Wise would have shown Browning's letter to Thayer without Browning's permission.

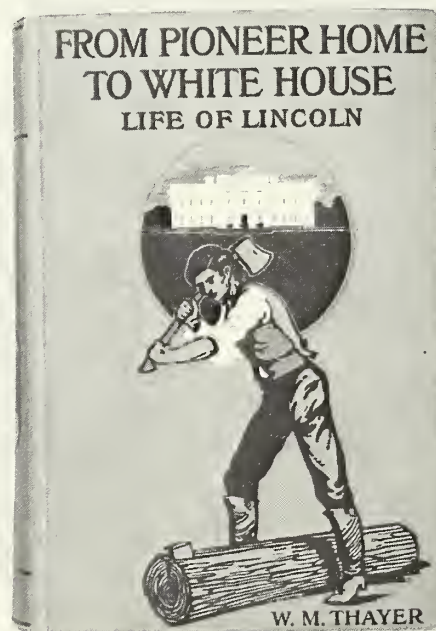
Years later, William Henry Herndon uncovered most of the details of the Mary Owens affair. It was a piece of detective work of which he was proud. Herndon had heard a story — he did not know whether it was true — "that during his term as President the lady to whom it was written — Mrs. O. H. Browning, wife of a fellow-member of the legislature — before giving a copy of it to a biographer, wrote to Lincoln asking his consent to the publication, but that he answered warning her against it because it was too full of truth." Thayer's letter makes Herndon's story somewhat plausible.



THE FIRST LETTER.

From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 3. Lincoln wrote his first letter, Thayer said, to obtain a preacher for Nancy Hanks Lincoln's funeral.



From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 4. Still popular in the 1920s, Thayer's expanded book featured more sophisticated art work on the cover.



From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 5. The 1882 edition of Thayer's expanded book featured on the cover, of all things, a football player.

We may never know. In the end, Thayer did not mention any romance in his book. On July 26, 1862, Browning saw President Lincoln at the White House and "read him a portion of the letter." Lincoln asked him to leave the letter with him. Browning did so, and thus the letter now appears in the Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. As far as is known, Lincoln never replied to Thayer's letter. *The Pioneer Boy*, and *How He Became President* appeared in 1863 and was a great success. Seven thousand copies had been printed by the end of 1863, and eighteen thousand were in print in 1864. An 1865 edition noted that twenty-eight thousand copies had been printed. He expanded the book in 1882 and sold about sixty thousand copies by the end of the century. Though no longer read, Thayer's book was, for a time, the most complete biography of Lincoln, and its rags-to-riches theme was clearly a formula for successful writing in Lincoln's century.

Some New Light on the Matson Slave Case

Of the handful of Abraham Lincoln's legal cases which are widely known, the Matson slave case is by far the most controversial. The anomaly of the Great Emancipator's involvement on the side of a slaveholder in this fugitive slave case has vexed and puzzled historians for decades. Early biographies tended to ignore it altogether. Later, some writers tried to explain it away by suggesting that Lincoln had so little taste for this species of litigation that he performed poorly in court, lost the argument, and thus allowed the fugitives to go free. Historians in recent years have been content to admit that Lincoln was a complex man, not always consistent, and to emphasize the rapid growth of his anti-slavery feelings in the later years of his life. All of this literature, however, has been consistent in focusing on the lawyer's personal moral dilemma. The legal issues involved

in the case have been substantially ignored.

The Matson slave case was a hearing for a writ of *habeas corpus* in behalf of Jane Bryant and her four children. They were the slaves of Robert Matson, a Kentucky planter who owned land in Coles County, Illinois. Matson brought slaves to Illinois to farm the land every year but always returned them after harvest, thus avoiding any claim that his slaves were permanent residents on Illinois's free soil and, therefore, entitled to freedom. Matson employed Jane's husband, Anthony, as a permanent overseer on the Illinois farm. This was strictly legal, for Anthony was a free man.

In 1847 Jane Bryant had a serious falling-out with Matson's white housekeeper, who may have been the master's mistress. Anthony began to fear that the housekeeper might persuade Matson to sell Jane and the children South. The housekeeper had threatened to do so, and she appeared to be in a position to make her threat stick. Anthony sought the help of Gideon M. Ashmore and Hiram Rutherford, local antislavery men. They kept Jane and the children at Ashmore's inn in Oakland, Illinois. Matson sought the remedy of law to gain the return of his property. He employed attorney Usher F. Linder, who managed to have the slaves confined to the jail in Charleston, the county seat of Coles County. Ashmore and Rutherford obtained a writ of *habeas corpus*, demanding Illinois's reasons for confining the fugitives, and a hearing was held before Judges Samuel H. Treat and William Wilson on October 16, 1847.

Lincoln came to Coles County and was also engaged on Matson's side. The opposing attorneys, Orlando B. Ficklin and Charles H. Constable, argued that the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and the Illinois Constitution made the slaves free by virtue of their residence on the soil of a state where slavery was illegal. Lincoln apparently argued that Jane Bryant was a seasonal worker following a long-accepted custom and was in no way a legal resident of the state. The judges ruled in favor of the slaves and declared them free.

The aforementioned facts in the case are common knowledge. New light comes from Don E. Fehrenbacher's *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). Professor Fehrenbacher explains that the legal difference between "domicile" and "sojourn" in a free state was a commonplace distinction in American jurisprudence in Lincoln's day. In Pennsylvania, for example, a master could remain in the state with his slaves for six months without affecting the legal status of the slaves. New York allowed a nine-month sojourn with slaves. In 1843 the Illinois Supreme Court had affirmed a master's right of sojourn in the state with his slaves, saying that to deny it would "tend greatly to weaken, if not to destroy the common bond of union amongst us." In the 1840s, however, New York and Pennsylvania revoked their laws allowing sojourn with slaves, and courts in other Northern states began to rule that slaves were freed merely by touching free soil. In the Matson case, some of Illinois's judges followed the new trend.

John J. Duff argued in *A. Lincoln: Prairie Lawyer* (New York: Rinehart, 1960) that Lincoln performed well in the case and that Ficklin and Constable performed poorly. All they had to do to assure her freedom, Duff claimed, was to cite as precedent the decision in *Bailey vs. Cromwell* — in which Lincoln himself had gained freedom for a Negro girl named Nance by arguing that the Illinois Constitution and the Northwest Ordinance prevented her being a slave in the state! Duff's argument betrays his lack of understanding of the issues in the Matson case. The issues in *Bailey vs. Cromwell* were altogether different. Nance was a resident of Illinois, an indentured servant rather than a slave. The Supreme Court ruled that Illinois law presumed a person free without any proof to the contrary, and Nance's "owner" could not produce that proof. The important point is that she lived in Illinois. *Bailey vs. Cromwell* had nothing to do with "domicile" and "sojourn."

The real marvel in the case is the reasoning of Treat and Wilson. Both men had been members of the Illinois Supreme Court in 1843, when it affirmed the right of sojourn with slaves in the state!

In the Matson slave case, Lincoln and Linder had the law on their side but not the judges.

LINCOLN'S LOVE LETTER.

But It Was Without the Word Love and Was a Proposal That Did Not Propose.

Of all the strange traits in Abraham Lincoln, certainly the strangest was his attitude toward women. The original letter to the lady he afterward married, of which so much has been conjectured, was found by accident after The Century biography was completed. If it has a rival in the world for oddity among love letters, it certainly has but one—that written by George Whitefield, which has long been considered the



MRS. LINCOLN.

queerest proposal ever penned. Mr. Lincoln's letter is addressed to "My Dear Mary" and is as follows:

You must know that I cannot see you or think of you with entire indifference, and yet it may be that you are mistaken in regard to what my real feelings toward you are. If I knew you were not, I should not trouble you with this letter. Perhaps any other man would know enough without further information, but I consider it my peculiar right to plead ignorance and your bounden duty to allow the plea. I want in all cases to do right and most particularly so in all cases with women. I want at this particular time more than anything else to do right with you, and if I knew it would be doing right, as I rather suspect it would, to let you alone, I would do it. And for the purpose of making the matter as plain as possible I now say you can drop the subject, dismiss your thoughts, if you ever had any, from me forever and leave this letter unanswered without calling forth one accusing murmur from me. And I will even go further and say that if it will add anything to your comfort and peace of mind to do so it is my sincere wish that you should. Do not understand by this that I wish to cut your acquaintance. I mean no such thing. What I do wish is that our further acquaintance shall depend upon yourself. If such further acquaintance would contribute nothing to your happiness, I am sure it would not to mine. If you feel yourself in any degree bound to me, I am now willing to release you, provided you wish it, while, on the other hand, I am willing and even anxious to bind you faster if I can be convinced that it will in any degree add to your happiness. This indeed is the whole question with me. Nothing would make me more miserable than to believe you miserable, nothing more happy than to know you were so. In what I have now said I think I cannot be misunderstood, and to make myself understood is the only object of this letter. If it suits you best not to answer this, farewell. A long life and a merry one attend you. But if you conclude to write back, speak as plainly as I do. There can be neither harm nor danger in saying to me anything you think just in the manner you think it. Your friend, LINCOLN.

Here is a love letter without the word love and a proposal that does not propose, surely the queerest thing of its class, for Whitefield's letter did at least offer marriage and gave reasons for desiring it.

By Mary Owen

His Character as Revealed

IT is generally conceded by historians and biographers that a man's true character is best revealed by his letters. Nothing could better illustrate this than Abraham Lincoln's letters both before and after he rose to the exalted position of President.

Lincoln's character has come down to us through the pages of history so grave and austere that it is hard to think of him in any other light than as a statesman, philosopher, wit and seer. But Lincoln had his romantic side. One of his love letters to Miss Mary Owens presents him to us as a most solemn kind of a lover.

It should be remembered however that he had had a former love affair with Ann Rutledge, who died most tragically during their courtship. This event had cast a gloom over his emotional nature which he had not fully recovered from. The following is one of his letters to Miss Owens, a village girl living in the little town of New Salem, Illinois, from whence Lincoln had but recently removed to the capital, Springfield, which then seemed to him a large and imposing city, with a very pretentious society circle.

My Dear Miss Owens:

I have often thinking of what we said about your coming to live in Springfield. I am afraid you would not be satisfied. There is a great deal of flourishing about in carriages here, which it would be your doom to see without sharing in. You would have to be poor without the means of hiding your poverty. Do you believe you could bear that patiently?

Whatever woman should cast her lot with me, should any ever do so, it is my intention

to do all in my power to make her happy and contented; and there is nothing that I can imagine that would make me more unhappy than to fail in the attempt. I know I should be much happier with you than the way I am, provided I saw no sign of discontent in you.

"What you have said to me may have been in the way of jest or I may have misunderstood it. If so, then let it be forgotten; if otherwise, I much wish that you would think seriously before you decide. What I have said I most positively will abide by, provided you wish it. My opinion is that you had better not do it. You have not been accustomed to hardship, and it may be more severe than you imagine."

"I know that you are capable of thinking correctly on any subject and if you deliberately mature upon this before you decide then I am willing to abide your decision."

"Affectionately yours,

"ABRAHAM LINCOLN."

Can any woman imagine a more dispassionate lover? Needless to say, Mary Owens refused him in quite as cool and dispassionate a manner as he proposed. But that Mr. Lincoln really thought more of the girl than he would let himself express, and thereby lost his suit, is evident from the following letter written to an intimate friend:

"I was mortified, it seemed to me, in a hundred different ways. My vanity was wounded by the reflection that I had so long been too stupid to discover her intentions, and at the same time never doubting that I understood them perfectly; and also that she, whom I had taught myself to believe no one else would have had,

actually rejected me with all my fancied greatness."

"And, to cap the climax, I then for the first time began to suspect that I was a little in love with her. But let it all go—I will try to outlive it. Others have been made fools of by the girls, but this can never be said of me. I most emphatically in this instance made a fool of myself."

"I have now come to the conclusion never again to think of marrying; I never could be satisfied with one who would be block-headed enough to have me."

by His Letters.

et only three years later he was engaged to the pretty, spritely Mary Todd, and then anon their engagement was broken. This affair so preyed upon Lincoln's sensitive and melancholy spirit that he wrote this lugubrious letter to a friend:

"I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family there would not be one cheerful face on the earth. Whether I shall ever be better I cannot tell; I awfully forebode I shall not. To remain as I am seems impossible. I must die or be better it appears to me."

In 1842 Mr. Lincoln, after a reconciliation, married Miss Todd, and thereafter most of the letters which have come down to us have been on public questions and political subjects.

Just before the Republican National Convention met in 1860, Senator Lyman Trumbull, of Illinois, wrote to Lincoln, asking him if he were anxious for the nomination for President, and whether he would subordinate his own ambition if the good of the Republican cause seemed to require such a sacrifice on his part. To this Mr. Lincoln replied:

"As you request, I will be entirely frank. The taste is in my mouth a little; and this no doubt disqualifies me to some extent from forming correct opinions. You may confidently rely, however, that by no advice or consent of mine shall my pretensions be pressed to the point of endangering our common cause. A word now for your own special benefit: You better write no letters which can possibly be distorted into opposition to me. There are men who are on the constant watch for such things, out of which to prejudice my peculiar friends against you.

"While I have no more suspicion of you than I have of my best friend living, I am kept in a constant struggle against suggestions of this sort. I have hesitated some to write this paragraph, lest you should suspect that I do it for my own benefit, and not for yours; but on reflection I conclude that you will not suspect me. Let no eye but your own see this, not that there is anything wrong or even ungenerous in it, but it would be misconstrued.

"Your friend, as ever,

"A. LINCOLN."

This letter shows how Lincoln was ever willing to sacrifice his personal ambition for a principle and to aid his party and his friends.

Lincoln had a very high ideal of the legal profession, and that he had no patience with a current notion that a lawyer could not be honest is evident from this letter which he wrote when a young man:

"Let no young man choosing the law for a calling yield to that popular belief. Resolve to be honest at all events. If in your judgment you cannot be an honest lawyer, resolve to be honest without being a

The Bronze Group on the Lincoln Monument, Representing Three Generations of a Family Fighting in the Service of the Union.

lawyer. Choose some other occupation, rather than one in the choosing of which you do in advance consent to be a knave."

While Mr. Lincoln was practising law in Springfield he received a letter from New York asking about the financial standing of a brother lawyer. He wrote this characteristic answer:

"I know the gentleman of whom you inquire. He has a wife and baby that ought to be worth fifty thousand dollars to any one; a table for his books and papers worth one dollar and fifty cents, and a big rat hole in the corner of his office that is worth looking into."

This letter illustrates how Lincoln could see the humorous aspects of anything however commonplace, and shows also how readily he could invent a story that would convey more in a few words than any long-drawn-out explanation.

During the war, when General McClellan was delaying an attack without any cause, and as an excuse had sent word to the President that his horses had sore tongues, Lincoln wrote back:

"I have just read your dispatch about fatigued and sore-tongued horses. Will you pardon me for asking what the horses of your army have done since Antietam that fatigues anything?"

President Lincoln, however, was not captious or hard to please. When a man had accomplished something he was ready and eager to give due and hearty praise, as is evident from this letter to General Grant, written just after the victory at Vicksburg:

"Major-General Grant:

"My Dear General—I do not remember that you and I ever met personally. I write this now as a gratifying acknowledgment for the almost inestimable service you have done the country. I wish to say a word further. When you first reached the vicinity of Vicksburg I thought you would do what you finally did—march the troops across the neck, run the batteries with the transports, and thus go below; and I never had any faith except a general hope that you knew better than I that the Yazoo Pass Expedition and the like could succeed. When you got below and took Port Gibson, Grand Gulf and vicinity I thought you should go down the river and join General Banks, and when you turned northward east of the Big Black I feared it was a mistake. I wish now to make the personal acknowledgment that you were right and I was wrong.

"Yours very truly,

"A. LINCOLN."

In all his letters the simple, unostentatious nature of the man shines forth, ever willing to acknowledge a fault or mistake of his own and praise the worth of another.

As soon as Mr. Lincoln was elected, on November 6, 1860, he became practically the backbone of the Republic, without waiting to be inaugurated. While threats of secession were in the air, and there was faltering and wavering and indecision on every hand Lincoln let his firm policy be known.

The following extracts from three of his letters to Senator Lyman Trumbull in December, 1860, show his position unequivocally:

"Let there be no compromise on the question of extending slavery. If there be all our labor is lost. The dangerous ground into which some of our friends have a hankering to run is Popular Sovereignty. Have none of it. Stand firm. The tug has to

come and better now than at any time hereafter.

"If any of our friends do prove false and fix up a compromise on the territorial question, I am for fighting again, that is all. It is but repetition for me to say that I am for an honest enforcement of the Constitution, fugitive slave clause included.

"Despatches have come two days in succession that the forts in South Carolina will be surrendered by the order or consent at least of the President.

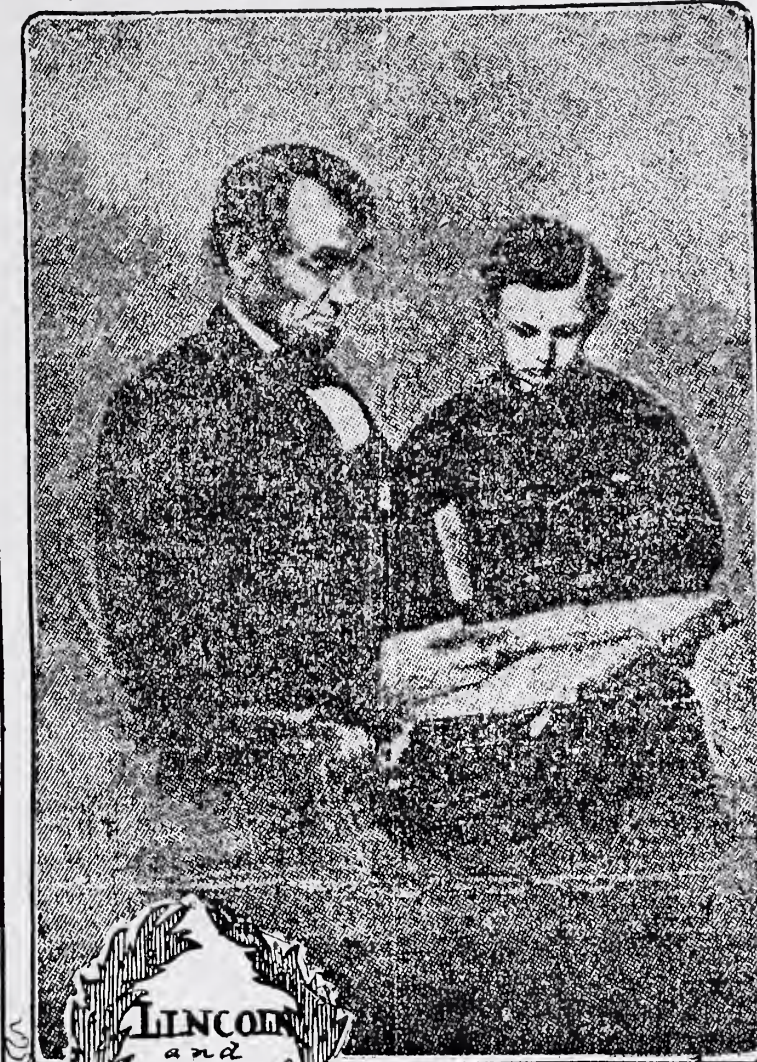
"I can scarcely believe this; but if it prove true, I will, if our friends at Washington concur, announce publicly at once that they are to be retaken after the inauguration. This will give the Union men a rallying cry and preparation will proceed somewhat on their side, as well as on the other.

"Yours as ever,

"A. LINCOLN."

HOW LINCOLN WAS ALMOST MARRIED TO GIRL FALSTAFF

Agrees to Marry Her Sight Unseen and Then Regrets; Humorously Tells How He Was Saved



By Permission of THE MACHILLAN Co. N.Y.

[One of the early incidents of Abraham Lincoln's life is humorously told by himself in a letter he wrote to a woman friend, in 1838. In this letter Lincoln tells how he nearly fell victim to the wiles of a woman and almost married her, although he did not love her. The name of this woman has never been revealed.

At the time of this love adventure the great president was twenty-seven years old.

As the fourth of The News articles on Lincoln below is related in Lincoln's own words the story of his near-marital adventure.]

A married lady who was a great friend of mine, being about to pay a visit in Kentucky, proposed to me that on her return she would bring a sister of hers with her on condition that I would engage to become her brother-in-law.

ally, in this instance, made a fool of myself. I have now come to the conclusion never again to think of marrying, and for this reason—I can never be satisfied with anyone who would be blockhead enough to have me.

CONGR

I accepted the proposal. Between you and me I was confoundedly in favor of the project. I had seen said sister three years before, thought her intelligent and agreeable, and saw no good objection to plodding life through hand in hand with her.

Sees His Fiancee

In due time the lady returned, sister in company, sure enough. In a few days we had an interview, and although I had seen her before, she did not look as my imagination had pictured her. I knew she was oversize, but she now appeared to be a fair match for Falstaff. I knew she was called an "old maid," and I felt no doubt of the truth of at least half of the appellation, but now, when I beheld her, I could not for my life avoid thinking of my mother; from her want of teeth, weather-beaten appearance in general, and from a kind of notion that ran in my head that nothing could have commenced at the size of infancy and reached her present bulk in less than 35 or 40 years; and in short I was not at all pleased with her.

But, what could I do? I made a point in all things to stick by my word.

"Well," thought I, "I have said it, and be the consequences what they may, it shall not be my fault if I fail to do it."

Tries to Convince Self

At once I determined to consider her my wife and, this done, all my powers of discovery were put to work in search of perfections in her which might be fairly set off against her defects.

I tried to imagine her handsome; I also tried to convince myself that the mind was much more to be valued than the person.

Shortly after this, without attempting to come to any positive understanding with her, I set out for Vandalla. After my return home I saw nothing to change my opinion of her in any particular. I now spent my time in planning how I might procrastinate the evil day for a time, which I really dreaded as much perhaps, as an Irishman does the halter.

After all my sufferings, here I am, wholly, unexpectedly completely out of my scrape—out, clear in every sense of the term—no violation of word, honor or conscience.

Pops the Question

After I had delayed the matter as long as I thought I could in honor do, I concluded I might as well bring it to a consummation without further delay, and so I mustered my resolution and made the proposal to her direct, but, shocking to relate, she answered, No.

At first I thought she did it through an affectation of modesty, but on my renewal of the charge I found she repelled it with greater firmness than before. I tried again and again, but with the same success, or rather want of success.

I finally was forced to give it up, at which I unexpectedly found myself mortified beyond human endurance. My vanity was wounded by the reflection that I had so long been too stupid to discover her intentions, and at the same time never doubting that I understood them perfectly.

And, to cap the whole, I then, for the first time, began to suspect that I really was a little in love with her. But let it all go. I'll try to outlive it.

Others have been made fools of by the girls, but this can never with me be said of me. I most emphatic-

domestic conflicts with his wife and family and died in obscurity in the year 1820. Many members of his family eventually left Kentucky and were never acquainted with their distinguished kinsman. The Thomas Lincoln farm is located on highway 68 at the settlement of South Elkhorn, five miles south of Lexington, on the Lexington-Harrodsburg Pike.

Mary Todd's Birthplace (Lexington)

A Kentucky highway marker at 501 West Short Street calls attention to Mary Todd's birthplace with the following statement: "On this site Mary Todd, wife of Abraham Lincoln was born December 13, 1818 and here spent her childhood." The nine room residence, with an ell in the rear, was erected by Robert S. Todd about 1813, on a lot belonging to the Major Robert Parker estate, adjoining his mother-in-law's place on the east (Grandma Parker's house is still standing). The building was a two-story, red brick house fronting on West Short Street. In this house Robert S. Todd and Eliza Parker went to housekeeping and here most of their seven children were born. The old house was later acquired by the St. Paul Catholic Church as a residence for the priest. For a good many years Father Barry, undoubtedly the most outstanding of all the Lexington Catholic priests, lived here until the old house was torn down in the mid 1880's. The present rectory was built upon the birthplace site. The brick in the old Todd home, together with much of the woodwork, and several mantel pieces and perhaps the stairway were used to build the superintendent's lodge at the entrance to the Calvary Catholic Cemetery on West Main Street, just opposite the Lexington Cemetery.

Home of Mary Todd—1832 to 1839 (Lexington)

In early November, 1847, congressman-elect Lincoln, his wife and two children visited the home of his father-in-law, Robert Smith Todd, in Lexington enroute to Washington, D. C., for the opening session of Congress. The house located at 574 West Main Street is today privately owned by Sterling D. Coke and is used as Republican Headquarters. The old house has an ell and with it there are eight or nine rooms. There are two signs identifying the Mary Todd Lincoln house. One is a bronze plaque on the front of the building, and the other is a highway marker on a steel pipe set into the sidewalk. The house is not open to visitors. The November, 1847 Lexington visit was not Lincoln's first. On August 25, 1841, with Joshua Fry Speed, Lincoln visited Lexington to see Speed's fiancée. Lincoln's third visit to Lexington was made with his family during the week of October 18, 1849. Lincoln, undoubtedly, visited in other Todd homes in or around Lexington. "Ellerslie" (home of General Robert Todd and grandfather of Mrs. Lincoln), which was razed in 1947, stood about one and one-half miles east of Lexington, on the Richmond Pike, opposite the Lexington Water Company's No. 1 reservoir. "Buena Vista" (summer home of Robert S. Todd), which was razed in 1947 or 1948 was located eighteen miles from Lexington, on the Leestown Pike in Franklin County.

Ward's Academy (Lexington)

When Mary Todd was about eight years old she entered the academy of Dr. John Ward, which was located in a large two-story building (still standing) on the southwest corner of Market and Second Streets. The Rev. John Ward, was the rector of Christ Episcopal Church. At fourteen years of age Mary Todd finished the preparatory course at Dr. Ward's and was ready to enter the select boarding school of Madame Victorie LeClere Mentelle. The Mentelle school for girls was located on a rolling tract of woodland opposite "Ashland" on the Richmond Pike. Mary Todd was enrolled for four years in this institution. Ward's Academy is better known as Dr. Ridgely's House. It is a brick house, erected around 1800-1805. Dr. Frederick Ridgely was an early member of the Transylvania Medical Faculty and one of the founders of the Lexington Public Library. In recent years the building was remodeled and fitted as a medical clinic. Since December, 1958, the Christian Churches of Kentucky have made it their headquarters. There is no marker on or near the building. A small bronze plate on the front of the building states that it was the early home of Dr. Ridgely.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Lincoln Statue (Frankfort)

On November 8, 1911, a standing Lincoln statue depicting "The President" by Adolph A. Weinman was unveiled in the rotunda of the State House of Kentucky at Frankfort. It was presented to the state by J. B. Speed of Louisville and President William Howard Taft gave the dedicatory address.

Old State House Museum (Kentucky State Historical Society)

The Lincoln material in the Old State House Museum in Frankfort is extremely limited. The collection consists of the fragmented breech of the cannon that was fired and exploded in Morganfield in 1840, when Lincoln delivered a campaign speech for William Henry Harrison, curios, photographs, Currier & Ives prints and oil portraits. The outstanding item of the collection is a Lincoln portrait by Charles Sneed Williams.

GREEN COUNTY

Green County Court House (Greensburg)

Lincoln land transactions are recorded in the Green County Court House (the oldest court house west of the Alleghanies—built 1786). One such item dated September 5, 1798, indicates that one Thomas Lincoln entered a land grant of 100 acres of second rate land by virtue of his having improved the same agreeably to an act of the Assembly entitled, "An act for encouraging and granting relief to settlers" and etc. Warrant No. 1044 describes the land on the waters of Mathis Creek. Other court records pertain to many of Lincoln's contemporaries who settled in Sangamon County, Illinois.

Site of Nathaniel Owens Home

The eight-room brick house of Nathaniel Owens, the first high-sheriff of Green County and father of Mary Owens, Lincoln's New Salem, Illinois, sweetheart, was built in 1797. It was razed in 1959. In this home was held the school known as "Brush Creek Academy" where the Owens children and Mentor Graham (Lincoln's so-called tutor) received their formal education. The site is located between Hodgenville and Greensburg, one mile south of the community called Allendale and a half mile east of Kentucky highway 61. The site is approximately eight miles north of Greensburg.

School Where Mentor Graham Taught (Greensburg)

The original Greensburg School house where Mentor Graham (Lincoln's tutor) taught from 1818 to 1823 is believed to be a part of the building in which Monroe Shreves now lives. It is located two city blocks directly west of the public square of Greensburg.

HANCOCK COUNTY

Squire Samuel W. Pate Home

Lincoln's first encounter with Kentucky law was near Lewisport at the home of Samuel W. Pate. The sixteen-year-old Lincoln, then a resident of Indiana operated a ferry boat on the Ohio River without a license. His competitors, John T. and Len Dill, seized him and brought him before the Justice of the Peace. After consulting the statutes, Lincoln was released by Squire Pate from the charge. The defendant had never ferried passengers across the Ohio River—only to the middle of the stream where they boarded steamboats. There is no documentary evidence attesting to this incident in Lincoln's life. The site is not marked. The Pate farm is owned by Eli Gregory. The home is located on highway 334 about fourteen miles from Hawesville.

Thompson's Ferry Site

Hugh Thompson's ferry opposite Troy, Indiana, was the point on the Ohio River where the Lincoln family left Kentucky soil for Indiana. This crossing of the Ohio was in the late fall of 1816. Thomas Lincoln's family at that time consisted of his wife, and two children, Sarah and Abraham. A marker attesting to these facts of the Lincoln migration would be most appropriate.

HARDIN COUNTY

Mill Creek Farm

On September 2, 1803, Thomas Lincoln purchased a 238 acre farm on Mill Creek. The purchase price was 118 pounds (current money of Virginia). After this purchase Lincoln's father resided from time to time on the

OWENS FAMILY

NATHANIEL

Died about 1846, lived to be eighty years old.
First High Sheriff of Green County
A gentleman of considerable wealth
Close, economical ,moneymaking man.
Honest in all his dealings
Allen's History p. 383

Old house still standing near Summersville 4 mi from Greensburg
Old fire places and ~~some~~ furniture there,
Brush Creek runs by rafm
Mrs. A. G. Nantz, informant

Thomas J. Hanes son of Jonathan Hanes taught
a subscription school on Bush Creek in 1834.

He was from Green County Kentucky, and in 1831
was a student in Bush Creek Seminary a private
school in the home of Nathaniel Owen.

Prof James T. M. Elvey of Transylvania University was
employed to teach the Owen children four daughters
and one son. Mr Owen sends his mother son

Thomas J. Hanes to attend this school. A Union Society
was organized Childs Bolemie and Literary Society
a branch of the Whig Society of Transylvania University.

In 1832 Hanes further moved to Herald County Ky

Old State Hist Soc Vol XIX Nos 1+2 p 63

1791 Green County Record
Vol. 18 - 1925

Is This the Answer

In response to the letter published last week we have received the following:

"William Owens was admitted to the bar of Greensburg at the June court, 1809. He was born in Fauquier County, Va., on the 4th day of May, 1773. At ten years of age he came to Kentucky with his maternal uncle, the justly renowned Simon Kenton. Colonel Owens was Captain of a Company in Wayne's Campaign; he was a good soldier and an efficient officer. Col. Owen was of poor and humble pretensions but had an indomitable will and was a man of great perseverance. His early advantages of education were poor and he was emphatically a self made man of towering native intellect. Soon after his return from the army he formed the acquaintance of the Hon. Judge Bridges, through whose influence he was induced to study law. After six months close application he was enabled to obtain a license, and at once commenced the practice of his profession. He settled in Danville and practiced extensively in Mercer and the adjoining Counties several years. In 1807 he removed from Danville to Columbia, where he continued to reside until his death, which occurred on the 7th day of November 1847.

Colonel Owens was for many years a senator representing Green Adair etc, in that department of the Legislature. He was the opponent of Judge Buckner in 1826 in one of the most exciting and strongly contested races for Congress I have ever known. He was defeated by a small majority. In 1805 he married Miss Mary McCain of Newcastle, Ky. For many years acted as Commonwealth Attorney for the district in which he resided. He was a devoted Mason and took great pleasure in the order. He was a man of great benevolence of heart and of unbounded liberality. He was ever the friend of the widow and orphan and the minister of Christ of whatever persuasion. The poor, distressed and friendless were never turned away empty from his door."

We are indebted to M. R. Burrese for the above which was taken from Allen's history of Kentucky.



MARY L. OWENS.

Born in Kentucky in 1808. Lincoln first met Miss Owens in 1833 at New Salem, where she made a short visit. In 1836 she came back to New Salem, and a warm friendship sprang up between them. The question of marriage was discussed in a disinterested way. Miss Owens left Illinois in 1838, and in 1841 she married a Mr. Jesse Vineyard. The letters written to her by Mr. Lincoln she herself gave to Mr. Herndon for publication.

